(c) Government has taken note of the shortage of manpower and has taken various steps for increasing the availability of trained manpower, which include:

(i) Expanding the facilities for marine education and training by allowing privat colleges to be opened.

(ii) Ensuring quality training at the maritime institutes as per international standards and introducing several new courses for pre and post sea training.

(iii) Action has been initiated for facilitating induction of retired naval officers into tne merchant navy.

(iv) Introduction of tonnage tax obligation on shipping companies to give onboard training to cadets.

(v) Permitting two years age relaxation and fee concession to encourage girl candidates to join maritime sector.

(vi) The training and examination systems have been reviewed to minimize the avoidable delays for obtaining certificate of competency.

India-Russia space co-operation agreement

1147. SHRI JAI PARKASH AGGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Russia propose to have joint space research and transfer of space technology under the space co-operation agreement;

(b) if so, the details thereof and salient features of the said agreement;

(c) the progress made so far with regard to the said agreement; and

(d) to what extent India would be benefited through this agreement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) and (b) Under Agreement signed on December 3, 2004 between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Russian Federation on Cooperation in the field of Exploration and Use of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes, there is a provision for joint space exploration and joint development of technologies in selected areas to be separately agreed upon. This Agreement provides a legal and organisational framework for carrying out different activities of mutual interest.

(c) Several cooperative activities including joint development, operation and utilization of the Russian global navigation satellite system GLONASS, joint development of a scientific satellite called Youthsat, Indian contribution to a Russian scientific satellite called Coronas-Photon and Chandrayaan-2 joint lunar exploration mission are under various stages of development.

(d) Cooperative activities with Russia under this Agreement will provide India with opportunities to expand the scope of its programmes, to optimise the use of resources, and to advance knowledge on space science.